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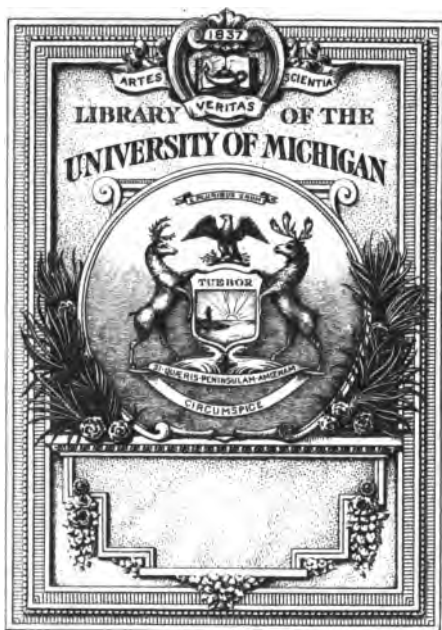
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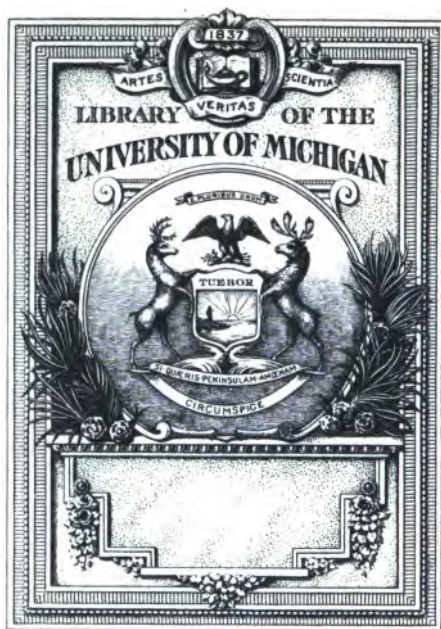
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BY

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CONTENTS

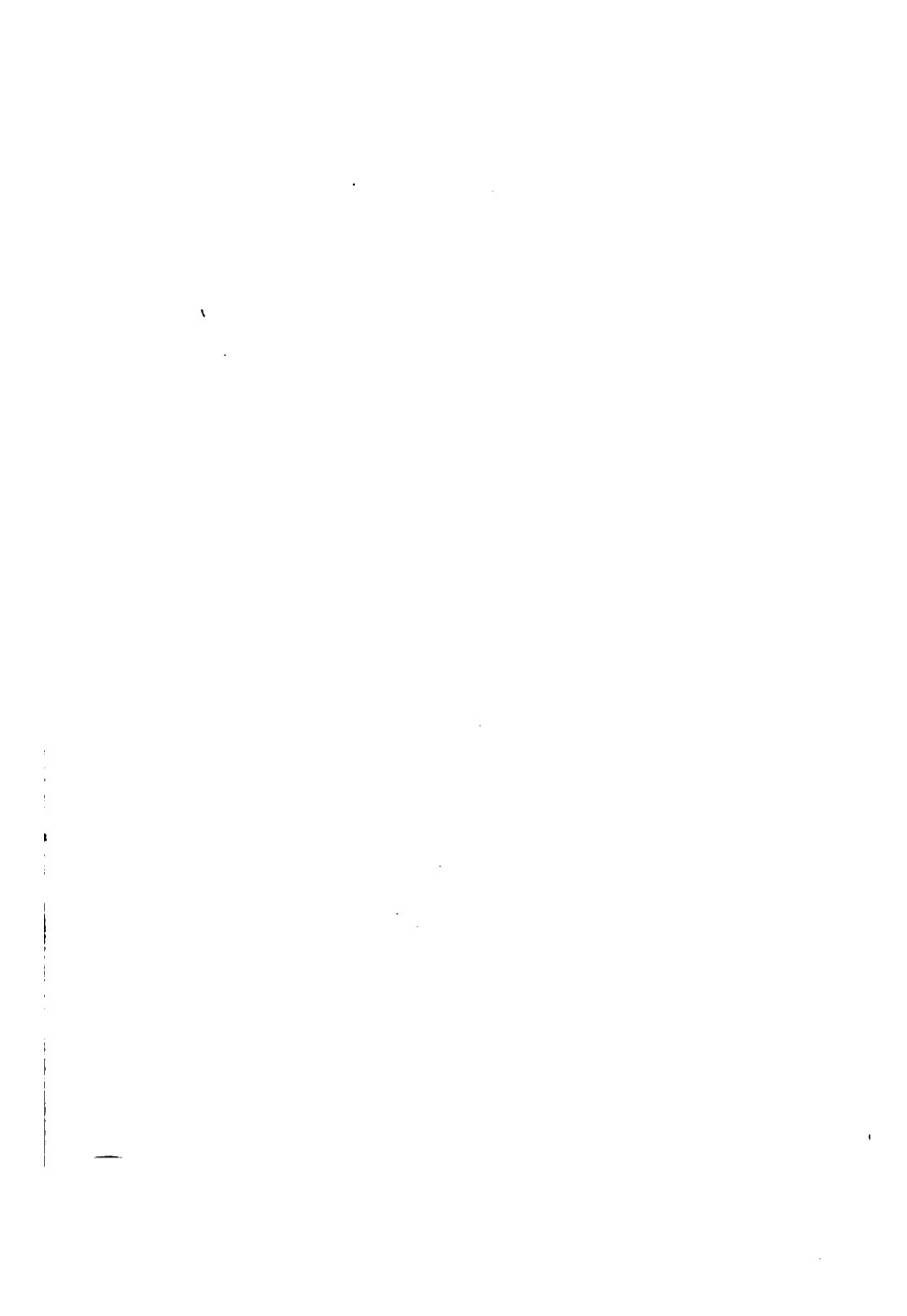
	PAGE
LURES IMMORTAL	I
LIKE TO A MORTAL BARQUE	4
DISILLUSIONED	5
APRIL	6
BEAUTIFUL LIE THE DEAD	8
TEARS	9
THE RETURN	10
BE THEN YOUR LIFE	11
CHILD SADNESS	12
AH, WHEN?	14
TO MURIEL, SINGING	16
AN OCTOBER DAY	18
THE HOSPITAL NURSE	19
WINTER DAWN	21
LOVE'S TRANQUILLITY	22
A WINTER NIGHT	23
DAWN AND LOSS	24
THE SMILE OF DANTE	26
BEATRICE CENCI	27
SHAKESPEARE	29
KEATS	31
A VIEW OF PETERBORO' MINSTER BY MOONLIGHT	32

	PAGE
THE REVEALED MADONNA	34
THE WOMAN AND THE FLOWER	35
INVALIDED	36
MY DEAD LOVE	38
PROSPERITY	39
CROMER ABBEY	45
KEATS TO FANNY BRAWNE	47
A NIGHTMARE OF LONDON	49
ENCHANTMENT	51
THE DOOM OF SAILS	53
THE AEROPLANE	55
MUSIC AND THE WOMAN SOUL	57
THE SUBMARINE	59
AYE, BUT TO DIE	61
THE FIREMAN	63
EMILY BRONTË	65
THE BLACK PERIL	67
THE MISER MOTHER	69
THE BLOW	71
A PARTING	73
A WOMAN	75
A BALLAD	76
MARGARET	77
LILY AND ROSE	79
MABEL	80
DREAMS AND THE DEAD	81
TREES	82
THE SONG OF "RANJI"	83
"CRICKET I SING"	84
THE ENGLISH SABBATH	89

CONTENTS

vii

	PAGE
LOVE AND THE POET	90
THE MODERN LOVER	91
MIRANDA'S EYES	93
NERO'S MOTHER: A DRAMA IN ONE ACT . . .	95
THE ADVERSARY: A DRAMA IN ONE ACT OF FOUR SCENES	116
THE KING: A TRAGEDY IN A CONTINUOUS SERIES OF SCENES	131



LURES IMMORTAL

SADLY, apparently frustrate, life hangs above
us,

Cruel, dark, unexplained;

Yet still the immortal through mortal incessantly pierces

With calls, with appeals, and with lures.

Lure of the sinking sun, into undreamed
islands,

Fortunate, far in the West;

Lure of the star, with speechless news o'er-
brimming,

With language of darted light;

Of the sea-glory of opening lids of Aurora,

Ushering eyes of the dawn;

Of the callow bird in the matin darkness
calling,

Chorus of drowsy charm;

Of the wind, south-west, with whispering
leaves illumined,

Solemn gold of the woods;
Of the intimate breeze of noon, deep-charged
with a message,
How near, at times, unto speech!
Of the sea, that soul of a poet a-yearn for
expression,
For ever yearning in vain!
Hoarse o'er the shingle with loud, unuttered
meanings,
Hurling on caverns his heart.
Of the summer night, what to communicate,
eager?
Perchance the secret of peace.
The lure of the silver to gold, of the pale
unto colour,
Of the seen to the real unseen;
Of voices away to the voiceless, of sound unto
silence,
Of words to a wordless calm;
Of music, doomed unto wandering, still re-
turning
Ever to heaven and home.
The lure of the beautiful woman through flesh
unto spirit,
Through a smile unto endless light;

Of the flight of a bird thro' evening over the
marsh-land,
Lingering in heaven alone;
Of the vessel disappearing over the sea-marge,
With him or with her that we love;
Of the sudden touch in the hand of a friend
or a maiden,
Thrilling up to the stars.
The appealing death of a soldier, the moon
just rising,
Kindling the battlefield;
Of the cup of water, refused by the thirsting
Sidney,
Parched with the final pang:
Of the crucified Christ, yet lo, those arms extended,
Wide, as a world to embrace;
And last, and grandest, the lure, the invitation,
And sacred wooing of Death;
Unto what regions, or heavens, or solemn
spaces,
Who, but by dying, can tell?

LIKE TO A MORTAL BARQUE

Like to a mortal barque,
Touching a fairy shore;
Half wondering, half in dread,
I fear to know thee more.

Safer the open sea,
Kinder large sunshine,
Than island perilous
On the green sea-line.

DISILLUSIONED

Doth Viola seem so cold? Yet virgin she
Disclosed unto the evening her full soul,
Telling her tale unto the violets,
Her history to the lilies, while the sun
Of passion glimmered to a gloomy west.
Thinking to clasp a God her arms enwrapped
Merely a solemn statue without life,
Faultless, approved, a stiff unmeaning form,
That which he seemed, dreaming she made
him seem.

The dream is dead, the hollow form remains.
Frail-flaming June, to what a bareness fallen!
None now can matter, after him she found
So little, whom she cherished as so great.
One leap her being made, and missed the leap,
Now must she crawl her way for evermore.

APRIL

O BRIEF and swift and sweet,
April appears,
Fickle, and shy, and fleet,
Laughing through tears.
Fitful and all afret,
With shower and gleam,
Magical mischief, yet
Greenly adream.
For she, so frailly fair,
Shall bring to pass
Pomps of the purple air,
Glory of grass.
Surely the elf shall yield
With moody moon,
Gold of the mellow field,
Riches of noon.
E'en as a girl unsure,
With hair unbound,

Yet may a poet lure
To song profound.
And, though she may not reap,
But passeth by,
She shall array the deep
Rose of July.

BEAUTIFUL LIE THE DEAD

BEAUTIFUL lie the dead;
Clear comes each feature;
Satisfied not to be,
Strangely contented.

Like ships, the anchor dropped,
Furled every sail is;
Mirrored with all their masts
In a deep water.

TEARS

SAD is the crystal tear
From eyes of youth,
Sadder the slower drops
Of married ruth.

Sad tears of maid or wife,
Brimming to fall;
Often the tearless eye
Saddest of all.

THE RETURN

Slow falls the sun, with slowly failing birds,
And a breeze of night!
Silent and returning herds
Through lingering light!

Sated with seas, with stark and foreign towns,
Green grass again!
I stride once more the spreading downs,
Then find the lane.

The tree, the brook and the wild garden, all
Have kept their place;
The sigh, the ripple I recall,
But fled thy face!

BE THEN YOUR LIFE

BE then your life as a swan that calmly glideth
On a full river!
Mine as the bird storm-tost
In cloud for ever.

Yet the calm for a hell without colour shall
smoothly prepare thee,
Sealing thy spirit;
But tempest and heaven shall I
Wildly inherit.

CHILD SADNESS

I

CHILD of a life so soft,
Laughter and sleep;
Why grow thine eyes so oft
Solemn and deep?

II

What of the gathering snow,
Winters that weary us?
Sprite, dost thou lightly know,
Momently serious.

III

What amid all thy joys
Shadow of sorrow?
What amid all those toys,
Fear of to-morrow?

IV

Flitting in pink or white
Over the lawn,
Feelst thou a chill of night
Coming on dawn?

V

Or did the fairies tell
Thee in a dream,
What we have learned too well,
Gloom after gleam?

VI

Came they through heavy dews
Under red skies,
Bringing thee silent news,
Making thee wise?

VII

Grief never came to thee
Through earthly portal,
Yet in thine eyes I see
Sadness immortal.

AH, WHEN?

I CAME at eve on a sunset field unknown to me,
Unknown and yet known.

Here did I run as a boy, or loitered a lover,
Ah, when?

I came at dawn on a river, visited never,
Strange, yet unstrange,
For I could follow faithful the wind of that
river

Away to sea.

I was driven late in the night to the house of
a stranger,

Never that house had I seen;
Though I never slept in it, yet could I tell
each room of it,

I knew my way.

At times a lonely face from a crowd looks
out at me,

Startling me, wherefore?

That sudden, flitting face I remember dimly,
Dimly familiar.
They played me music at midnight, never yet
heard by me;
Unheard, yet heard,
Ah, when?

TO MURIEL, SINGING

I

HIGH the soprano goes,
Shrill to the noon,
Yet thy contralto
Makes for the moon.

II

Though in that earthly voice
Melody clear,
In thy unearthly song,
Music more dear.

III

Though she so plainly sings
Moving the crowd;
Thou dost a meaning bring,
Low, but not loud.

IV

All we have wished to say
Though but in dream;
Dawn and the midnight come
From thee astream.

V

Some may, no doubt, delight
In clearer sound,
Yet in thy note have I
More meaning found.

VI

Wail for a world gone by,
Battle and prayer.
Who should express but thou,
Deeply aware?

AN OCTOBER DAY

THROUGH dry and hurrying leaves
Golden our way;
Sound of the wind, south-west
From the wild day!

Wild all thy loosened hair,
Blown in my eyes;
Till thou dost seem a part
Of autumn skies.

Wild from the setting sun
Rushes the rain;
Ah, be it true or false,
Thy kiss again!

THE HOSPITAL NURSE

(The real tragedy of the wards)

TIME was, when filled with ministering dew,
I like an angel to the bedside flew
Of writhing anguish, or insane distress,
Of marred and mutilated wretchedness.
I might not sleep for some remembered cry,
Or upward stare of fixed agony.
My heart beat fast at sorrow not my own,
Easily melting at another's moan.
Alas, a gradual apathy congeals
My blood, my heart, and all that in me feels.
Punctual, timed, obedient to the clock,
Howe'er the injured on his pillow rock;
This very heart within me does but tick,
And dead that sympathy that once was quick.
Almost I envy now the thrilling throe,
Of hope and fear the furious ebb and flow,
Which these upon their couches undergo.

More tragic is my soft and noiseless tread,—
This service from the dying to the dead;
This grey acquaintance with fierce suffering,
And bosom proof against the sharpest sting,
Fearless familiarity with pain;
The dreadful victory of pity slain.
The touch unerring and the finger sure,
Yet all within now stricken beyond cure!

WINTER DAWN

STILLNESS and creeping of colour,
A flushing of gold and of red;
Opening eyes of Aurora,
Roused from a crocus bed.

Voices of kine from the meadows,
Weary of waning night;
Birds in a husky chorus,
Darkly aware of light.

Lamps in the valley appearing,
Bright spurts, one after one;
A joyous crackle of faggots,
And the heavy night is gone.

LOVE'S TRANQUILLITY

DEAREST, our love is not of dark or bright,
Or verses murmured in midnight;
Nor hath it aid from starlight or the moon,
Or music's long and splendid swoon.
Not time, nor distance over it have power,
No, nor the dead and wingless hour.
Though simple and of everyday it seem,
It holds the quality of dream.
O, it is proof against delay and death,
And hath a tranquil morning breath;
Is fragrant as the wild and wayside rose
That over grass and hedgerow blows.
It hath a very real life in the sun,
Scatheless and dateless shall it run;
Do others call it cold and without life,
Since in it is no kind of strife?
Ah no, its peace is kindled from white flame,
And from the core of fire it came.

A WINTER NIGHT

LET others laud the summer's languorous light
And lucid glow;
For me this dim, unruly winter night,
Wild winds that blow!
Without, uproar and storm upon the pane,
Turmoil and cries;
The loud lamenting of the hurricane,
The sleet that flies!
Within, this satisfying silence deep,
With no desire;
An apathy divine, surpassing sleep,
And kindly fire.
That outward conflict brings an inward truce
Within this breast.
The elemental strife doth but induce
A deeper rest.

DAWN AND LOSS

I LACK thee in the noonday light,
I want thee in the deep of night,
But most, when sadder than all words,
I hear the voice of waking birds.

Then seem I most of all forlorn,
When the grey hour is crudely born.
There is no mercy in that ray,
On hopeless fancies comes the day.

Then is the hollow world remade,
God! But the image will not fade!
That ghostly chorus from the leaves!
Reminds and yet again bereaves!

The widowing beam upon me falls,
And to a grey remembrance calls;
Re-built is the massy loss,
And re-erected is the cross.

For in that dimness we had speech
Simple and prudent, each to each;
Slow on my shoulder fell thy head,
I held thee close as skies grew red.

O dear wert thou in silent dew!
Thrice dear in deepening of the blue!
But now I see from this dark room
Only the glimmer of a tomb.

THE SMILE OF DANTE

WHENCE dost thou wear that smile, grim
Florentine,

That somewhat softens a too tense distress,
Giving a gentleness to each harsh line,
And something of more human wistfulness?
Was it when thou didst hear behind thee said:
"Lo, there the man who goeth down to hell;
"And holds a solemn converse with the dead,
"Whence earthward comes he all the world
to tell."

Why doth that softness on thy lips abide,
And tenderness about thy mouth remain?
Is it some sweetness caught from her that died
And whom thou wast allowed to see again?
Still thou dost smile in answer to her smile,
Given to sustain thee through this world
awhile?

BEATRICE CENCI

WHO stealeth down the turret-stair
In raiment white with streaming hair?
The moon is hid, the stars are pale,
The night-wind hath forgot to wail.
Like to a priestess seemeth she
Addressed to some dread ministry.
What solemn sacrifice or rite
Comes she to celebrate this night?
A deed of Hell, and yet of Heaven,
Into these slender hands is given;
Blood must she spill, but evil blood,
As evil as hath ever flowed.
Now enters she the moonlit room,
She sees a bed bright in the gloom;
Whereon an old man slumbers deep;
Ah, God, how well the wicked sleep!
But a faint breathing all she hears,
As silently the couch she nears.

Now the bright dagger at her breast
She plucks from out her maiden vest.
Why hesitates she? and a space
Uncertain stands above that face?
Is it some memory of youth,
That brings upon her heart this ruth?
Some far-off picture that she sees,
When she was dandled on his knees?
Is it the hair, so utter white,
Hair that should seem a holy sight?
Then the red shame leaps to her heart,
And furious thoughts again upstart.
O'er him she leans; no eyelid he
Stirs as tho' warned of destiny.

What cry was that? A single cry,
That pierced the palace to the sky?
And then came down a silence deep,
Yet had each sleeper leapt from sleep,
And wandering lights and hurrying feet,
Hither and thither shadows fleet.
But she in silence pure and clean
Passed to her chamber all unseen.

SHAKESPEARE

I

OTHERS have pictured thee as mild and bland,
And of a cloudless boundless human view;
Of calm regard and of composure grand,
To whom was nothing strange, and nothing
new.

Not thus do I conceive thee; but as one
That bitterly exclaimed on human doom,
And as a spirit sad beneath the sun,
And dreading a worse thing beyond the tomb.
Man but "an angry ape" appeared; who fed
With torment laughter of the gods on high;
Lear on the heath, Othello by the bed
Awakened but the mockery of the sky.
And ah! in this dark welter of the soul
No guide art thou and urged to no goal.

II

O true that thou couldst warble pastoral bliss,
Of forest and green field and fairy land,
Since to thy boundless reach nought came
amiss,

Thou to the nearest task didst set thy hand.
And yet thy deepest hour was vast despair,
And the true mood of thee was dark and fell;
Then heaven with human lightning didst thou
bare,

Thy thunder echoed in the pools of hell.
A sunny smiler all with God at rest,
This would they have thee for thy lighter
strain.

To me a rebel dost thou stand confest,
With mighty mutiny of heart and brain;
And in no vale of Arden thy renown,
But accusation of the heavens thy crown.

KEATS

LAMENT is made that thou wast all too young,
When Death to silence carried thee away,
With brain ungleaned, and many songs unsung,

Giving the promise of so fair a day.
But I have seen more glory in sunrise
Than in the deepening of the azure noon,
Gleaming untimely gold in fairer skies
Than ever lay about an arctic moon.
And I have caught in darkness ere the sun,
A lovelier-liquid note from matin bird
Warbled, than when the full day had begun,
Or in the mid-day splendour I have heard.
Better to leave behind a world to sigh,
Than living fail a world to satisfy.

A VIEW OF PETERBORO' MINSTER
BY MOONLIGHT

THREADING the narrow ways of the town of
my boyhood
In silence of moon and frost;
Sudden I paused and caught my breath in a
wonder,
Wondered, and held my breath.
The minster arose, no longer the pile I re-
membered
Of solid masonry built;
But an exhalation, of solemn silver enchanted,
A vision, no thing of stone.
Like the vast and beautiful sigh of a wander-
ing angel
Here translated to earth,
Or the tear of a spirit for all humanity fallen,
The tear of an exiled God.
And I feared, as I stood, that it might in a
moment vanish,

VIEW OF PETERBORO' MINSTER 33

Vanish and utterly fade;
Frail as a visible prayer up-breathed to the
midnight,
Starlike ending in stars.
And I thought of the priestly masons of times
forgotten
Who builded, and building hymned.
Had the mighty church become indeed as a
vision,
A fair intangible dream?
And aisle and transept and choir created of
moonlight
To melt in the rising sun?
So musing I roamed thro' the precinct and
dead reposing,
But sudden I knew and I wept;
For I came at last to a tomb with splendour
lighted,
And the stone inscribed with thy name.

THE REVEALED MADONNA

As I stood in the tavern-reek, amid oaths and
curses,
Mid husbands entreated and drugged,
Amid mothers poisoned and still of the poison
sipping,
Here harboured from storms of home;
For a moment the evil glare on a woman
falling
Disclosed her with babe at her breast;
An instant she downward gazed on the babe
that slumbered,
And holy the tavern grew,
For she gazed with the brooding look of the
mother of Jesus,
On her lips the divine half-smile;
An instant she smiled; then the tavern reeled
back hell-ward,
And I heard but the oath and the curse.

THE WOMAN AND THE FLOWER

I CAME into a garret where one lay
A woman dying: round her children starved
And piteously entreated her for bread.
Her husband in the tavern drank and sang.
Scarce could she speak, but on the coverlid
The veined hand a wild flower held and
clasped.

I spoke to her of help, of life restored,
Of hunger satisfied: she answered me:
"The hunger that I have is for the flower;
A deeper hunger than for any food.
Why was I given this in my life so late?
I did not know such things were in the world.
Its colour kills me and the scent it gives.
I could not rise up in this weary world
Again; I have seen this and I long to go
After it, follow it somewhere thro' the dark.
So soft, so bright it claims me: let me die."
That night she died; the stumbling husband
found
Her cold, but in her hand fixed was the flower.

INVALIDED

I

To England bear him wounded deep;
Home to this island breeze;
To leaves that medicine the brain,
And ministering trees.

II

Where if he upward look, no vault
Of fire his eyes shall view;
But softer skies of passing cloud,
Grey with a soul of blue.

III

And like a sister be the breeze,
Star like a mother bend,
And all-restoring Nature now
The wounded soldier tend.

IV

At dawn the odorous unseen bush
Into his room be blown;
England through open window sweet
Wafted from fields unknown!

V

Till that first zest of life return
Upon a heart close-sealed;
And like a child, and yet a man,
He walks his native field.

MY DEAD LOVE

(Addition to the sequence entitled "The Apparition," in the author's volume "Poems" 1898)

I

My *dead* love came to me in haste,
And stood beside my bed,
"Ah, why art thou so long away,
Leaving me lone?" I said.

II

"Dearest, so many tasks and toils
Are set the soul above;
And dreadful errands that make pure,
Belittle earthly love."

PROSPERITY

A modern ballad

I

WIFE, though the board between us gleams
With glass and silver cell;
And though in splendid silence stands
Each liveried sentinel;

II

Though heavily the table glows,
With many a monstrous bloom,
And all of comfort and of cheer
Forbids the human gloom;

III

There is a gulph between us fixt,
Our souls can never cross,
Nor you to me, nor I to you,
Yet ours no tragic loss.

IV

No doubt, or soiled faith hath raised
The irremeable sea,
That sunders with a silent surge
The shores of you and me.

V

No festering secret such as eats
Into an olden love,
No white confession in moonlight
This separation wove.

VI

No glamour in a slow decline,
Or magic dead with days,
Nor passion into friendship fled,
Nor discontinued praise.

VII

True is it that no child was born
To bind us with bright eyes;
Or with its babble draw us close,
Its chuckle at the skies.

VIII

Yet others closer-knit have lived,
Joined by a yearning dumb;
Though unconfessed, how deep the wish
Burned, and was never numb.

IX

O smooth and rich and still our life,
And oiled in every wheel;
Anticipating every care
Noiseless the servants steal.

X

You love your music, I my book;
By some tremendous chord,
Your soul is shaken in your stall,
And with you is the Lord.

XI

A moment is your craving fed,
Unspoiled by human speech;
You leave the holy place; with all
Your soul beyond my reach.

XII

Then should I meet you on the stair,
You tremble as with sin;
No murderess issued from the bed
Could seem more dark within.

XIII

In deepest courtesy we pass;
Yet never a word is said;
As two ships without hail by night
Pass when the moon is dead.

XIV

Decorous and slow each seventh day
We to the church proceed
Yet what have we to be forgiven,
What absolution need?

XV

Our custom good; the vergers fly
Like salesmen in a shop,
In case the hassocks are too few,
Or we a book should drop.

XVI

So hour by hour, and day by day,
From placid week to week,
Existence keeps its ordered path,
Arranged each thing we seek.

XVII

Yet why, O wife, do you and I
Scarce dare to speak or meet?
What is the trouble twixt us two?
A severance so complete?

XVIII

Wife, there hath dripped between our souls
A dreary rain of days;
Better mistake, or quarrel fierce,
Better some spark or blaze!

XIX

Softness hath worn our love away;
And smoothness passion slain;
The dreadful gliding of a life,
Unprivileged by pain.

XX

O let us tear us from this ease,
And wheresoever hurled,
Into the battle let us rush,
And grapple with the world.

CROMER ABBEY

HERE are the crimson flowers of sleep,
But in this marsh may no man reap;
More barren than the sea this land,
More sterile than the ocean sand.
And league on league is flat and dead,
O'erflowing all with poppies red,
For evermore unharvested.
Yet springing from sterility
The abbey rises to the sky,
Fissured by years and rent with time,
And yet bare-headed and sublime.
More beautiful than any flower
Stands from the waste the reverend tower,
A ruin, lonely to the air;
Massy, memorial, and bare.
Where now are they, those holy men,
Who laboured the unyielding fen?
Who leaning on a spade would pray,
And toiling carol all the day,

Sending a lonely psalm on high,
Or hymn uplifting to the sky?
Some say that still at deep midnight
You may behold a solemn sight
Of cowléd men in order go,
Passing in silence to and fro;
Till once again a bell is rung
And once the ancient anthem sung;
Then all the throng will disappear,
Leaving the dreariness more drear.
Howe'er that be; now but remains
The unpeopled flatness of the plains.

KEATS TO FANNY BRAWNE

You are the spirit of the haunted mere,
O'erhung by whispering foliage, and you wear
The shifting silver of the wayward moon;
In you lies all the glory of the world,
The splendours and the shadows of the sea;
And all that grows and glows in you is shown,
Red clouds of morning and the last of day.
You are that Helen whose sweet smile allured
The Grecian keels across Ionian foam;
I think of you with all those damsels bright,
Who, rising from green waves or forests dark,
Waylaid the traveller to a perilous doom,
Whether to silent foam of fairyland,
Or the dense secret of entangling woods.
And all about you is the mystery
That haunts and tempts, and gleams, but ever
flees.

And yet at times I feel you but a shadow,
Owing your magic to this fiery soul;
I, I with golden fable gird you round,

Or with a silver mist of antique dawn,
With shapes from gorgeous cloudland and
from dream.

And ah, my tarrying with you is but brief,
For death, red-bright, wells upward on my lips.

A NIGHTMARE OF LONDON

I DREAMED a dream, perhaps a prophecy!
That London over England spread herself;
Swallowed the green field and the waving
plain,
Till all this island grew one hideous town.
And as I gazed in terror rooted, so
The City seemed to take a dreadful life,
To be a monster that desired and felt;
And still did she perceptibly advance,
Blacken and grasp and seize and wither up.
Northward she spread, and did assimilate
Her sister cities of the loom and wheel
That welcomed her with whirring ecstasies;
She made the sky a pall, and as she moved,
Blighted the breathing forests and the woods,
And where the flower grew, now her pave-
ment lay.
And all the air grew dark, and there was
heard,

In place of rippling wave and whispering wind,
Only the hoot of griding car, the shriek
And fiery belch of engines to the cloud.
A human army from before her fled;
But swollen, spiderish, without shape or sleep,
She stole, till now opposed her but the sea;
Ocean preserved his sanctity of foam.

ENCHANTMENT:

"Woman Wailing for Her Demon Lover"

Singing through the corn she goes;
She no mortal sorrow knows;
Singing clear as doth a brook,
Rilling in a secret nook.

Virgin is she in her thought,
Lonely is she and unsought;
All her soul is pure and free,
Still as is the frozen sea.

Yet away! Nor come again!
For to love her were but pain;
Vainly, vainly to pursue,
Eyes of light and luring blue.

Tell your passion! take her hand!
Ah! she cannot understand
Beautiful exceedingly;
Perfect and without pity.

Flee the maiden, lest she speak
The faëry word, that makes thee weak!
She they say in moonlight whist
By a demon hath been kissed.

THE DOOM OF SAILS

ALAS! must ye utterly vanish, and cease from
amidst us,

Sails of the olden sea?

Now dispossessed by the stern and stunted
ironclad,

Wingless and squat and stern?

Purple sails of the heroes lured to the West-
ward,

Spread for the golden isles!

Sails of a magic foam with faëry plunder,

Wafting the wizard gold!

Sails of the morning, come like ghosts on the
sea-line,

With midnight load of the deep!

Sails of the sunset, red over endless waters,

For the furthest Orient filled!

Sails of the starlight, passing we know not
whither,

Silent, lighted, and lone!

Sails of the seaman accursed, and cruising for
ever

Hoist by a spectral crew!

Sails set afire by the lightning, resounding to
tempest,

That drum and thunder and sing!

Sails that unruffled repose on a bosom of azure,

Glassed by a placid flood!

Alas! must ye go as a dream, and depart as a
vision,

Sails of the olden sea?

THE AEROPLANE

LEAVE us the air! enough the jar
Of snorting engine, grinding car,
The very heavens ye now would mar;
Leave us the air!

The air where dreamy birds do sing,
Under Aurora reddening,
And float on such a blissful wing.
Leave us the air!

Air doth the brow of age renew
Darkly redeeming us with dew,
And lifting to a boundless blue.
Leave us the air!

The ancient silence hath but stirred
To solemn thunder and sweet bird;
There must the aeroplane be heard?
Leave us the air!

Air that is bosom of our pain,
That breathes on the besieged brain,
And murmurs mercy of the rain;
Leave us the air!

Hither and thither are we tossed.
Speed have we gained, but at the cost
Of faded calm and firmness lost;
Leave us the air!

Whate'er the silly crowd enjoys,
Our Progress is but stench and noise,
We scream and shout and grasp but toys.
Leave us the air!

The earth is blackened from our eyes,
And filled with dismal hoots and cries,
Spare to profane the holier skies;
Leave us the air!

MUSIC AND THE WOMAN SOUL

I

ALL London in dim hurry streams
Beside my door; then why,
Cushioned in comfortable ease,
Is mine this apathy?

II

And flower and plant upon me pall;
Palls too the written page;
The soundless and the sumptuous life,
The splendour of the cage.

III

Death may some brilliant lightning flash,
Some waking thunder roll;
Till then I waste in cloudless calm,
And starve through all my soul.

IV

Only by music am I freed,
In melody find wings;
No written word of poetry
The mighty Spaces brings.

V

Then Sirius far behind me lies,
The Sun is long outsoared;
The Universe is but a sound,
Creation but a chord!

VI

Here can I find my only flight,
Tread where Beethoven trod;
So am I raised, so am I rapt,
And lose myself in God!

THE SUBMARINE

Suggested by Admiral Wilson's report

I

SHE slideth through the green sea-night,
Certain and cruel without light;
In ocean glooms her deaths are done,
She craves no comfort of the Sun.

II

She striketh low, she striketh sure,
No armour shall her thrust endure;
The Iron-clad quails through every tower,
Subsiding in elaborate power.

III

No mailed fortress then shall save
That metal mountain of the wave,
No mounded castle of the deck,
No yawning guns that yearn to speak.

IV

Once in the clear and cruder days
A man might see the lunge that slays;
The point he strove to baffle well,
Missed, but not all in blindness fell.

V

But no man knoweth where She steals,
If far away or at our keels;
Sudden She strikes without a sound,
And leaves a mute but mortal wound.

VI

What clamour of old ocean-war,
What thunder belched at Trafalgar,
Matches in terror the unseen
Stab of the silent Submarine?

VII

So, late in time has come to be
This man-built menace of the sea;
God gave no monster to the main
To make the works of man so vain.

“AYE, BUT TO DIE!”

WHEN I would fain be freed of this dull
breath,
And tempt the dark uncertainty of death,
Then Shakespeare's warning verse appals the
mind;
Regions of ice I fear and viewless wind;
And yet that we shall cease forever trust,
And this sad consciousness be blown in dust.
But even though personality persist,
And we endure behind this veiling mist;
Give me Prometheus' crag, the undying thirst
And unreach'd fruits of Tantalus accurst!
Give me the fierce and purgatorial flame
That eats into the soul and purges blame,
And scorches with a realized shame;
The cleansing torment, purifying slow,
Till I ascend the wiser for the woe,
Than here to drudge and ache, but never
grow!
If pain shall save, who then shall fear to die,

And exaltation fetch from agony?
O better all the terrors priests have told,
That in dark durance may the spirit hold,
Exile for æons from the smile of God,
The unavenging, yet the chastening rod,
Than this ignoble war of "how" and "whence,"
The unglorious fight for necessary pence;
In death at least I plunge in grander strife,
Than sordid ills, wherewith this world is rife,
Life's meanness makes the misery of life.

THE FIREMAN

(An impression of the street)

His foe is fire, fire, fire!
Hark his hoarse dispersing cry,
From his path asunder fly!
Speed! or men and women die,
For his foe is fire, fire!

His foe is fire, fire, fire!
He is armed and helmed in brass,
Let his thundering chargers pass;
Be the iron Strand as grass,
For their foe is fire, fire!

His foe is fire, fire, fire!
On he rushes as in gold,
Under him a chariot rolled,
As in Roman triumph old,
But his foe is fire, fire!

His foe is fire, fire, fire!
Red the vault above him reels,
Now the blistering stairway peels,
But the battle-bliss he feels,
For his foe is fire, fire!

His foe is fire, fire, fire!
Up the ladder flies he light,
Disappears in dreadful night,
Now re-starts upon the sight,
Sudden out of fire, fire!

His foe is fire, fire, fire!
And no word the hero saith,
Only on his arm hath breath
Something between life and death,
Snatched from fire, fire, fire!

His foe is fire, fire, fire!
Bring him to the victor's car,
Richer is his spoil of war,
Than from Roman battle far,
Who has triumphed over fire.

EMILY BRONTE

DAUGHTER of thunder and the northern moor,
Singer of heath and grim and cruel souls.
Yet of thy Love remembered deep in snow.
Who taught thee in that bleakness to believe,
Who told thee in that dimness so to trust
Holding so fast a God for all the creeds?
Loneliness only could such lightning make,
So stern, so tender! only barren hills
Could wring the woman riches out of thee.
They live not long of thy pure fire composed,
Earth asks but mud of those who will endure.
Some star was too impatient for thy soul,
In silence summoning through English dew.
Did Shelley linger downward to grey hairs,
Was Keats permitted that rich brain to glean,
Or all his glowing morning to fulfil?
Or Byron like thee in his later fire,
When the true lightning of his soul was bared
Long smouldering till the Missolonghi torch?

Soul-solitary! taught by lonely flame;
No need for thee to mix in civic crowds,
Knowledge was thrilled to thee upon the heath,
And wisdom came to thee from northern stars.
Yet loving thy stern verse, I most am held
By Heathcliffe following dreamily the dead.

THE BLACK PERIL

I

BEWARE the black blood with the white!
The skull of brass, the hands that tear!
The lecherous ape, not human quite,
The tiger not outgrown his lair!

II

Beware the strong and gleaming fangs,
Fit for the forest where he ranged!
The cruel simian arm that hangs!
He goes upright, but is not changed.

III

Worse than the wolf descending gaunt,
Or lion whom starvation brings,
The village of the plain to haunt;
For in your midst he prowls and springs.

IV

And him no shout upraised can fright,
Nor lighted bon-fire scare away;
Restless he crouches day and night,
Leaps! and a woman is his prey.

THE MISER MOTHER

"MOTHER, what dost thou nigh my bed?
Five years are gone since thou wert dead;
All round us is the hush of night,
And the moon is bright!

"The moon shines through thee, mother old!
What is it that thou wouldst unfold?
In life thou ne'er didst love me well;
What wouldst thou tell?

"When I was but a lonely mite,
How I would shudder from thy sight!
And backward held my sobs for fear
That thou shouldst hear."

"My son, forget the blows I gave!
For we are weak within the grave;
Never a blow this arm could deal,
Which thou couldst feel!



"Go! take from out the garden wall,
The stone that nearest of them all
Lies to the crumbling corner green
Where the moss hath been.

"There shalt thou feel a shining heap
Of golden pieces hidden deep;
Up now! and to the garden haste!
The night doth waste.

"Take up the golden pieces all
Then dig, and let a few e'en fall
Upon my coffin, of the best,
That I may rest.

"I ne'er did love thee from thy birth
But I will bless thee under earth,
If this my wish thou wilt fulfil,
And I be still."

The mother faded without sound;
Her son the golden pieces found;
Dug deep; and what she so did crave
Dropped in her grave.

ND

THE BLOW

(The true story of an ancient house)

I STRUCK my dear son; I, his sire,
An idiot made him in my ire;
I hear him mumble in the sun,
And see him listless walk and run.

If I by penance might atone,
And kneeling wear away the stone!
If I might hope by prayer or fast
To absolve me of my sin at last!

Can any fast or penance heal
The stare thy father's hand did deal?
What withering vigil can restore
Thy happy laughter as of yore?

Thy mother of thy daftness died:
She could not bear thee at her side;
Thy vacant eyes became her doom,
Thy jargon laid her in the tomb.

See at my side he loves to stand,
He puts into my own his hand;
And at my knees his favourite place;
God! how he smiles into my face!

A PARTING

LONE in the ghostly garden,
Lone in the moonless night,
I wait and watch thy window
For thy coming taper light.

Motionless all the garden,
Though the heavy rose is sweet,
Each bird hath sunk to silence,
The dew is at my feet.

At last thy light in the lattice,
With narrow stream on the lawn!
Ah, look thou forth but a moment,
And flood me with thy dawn!

Darkened again thy lattice!
Hence! through the world my way;
How all the garden shivered,
Cold in the sigh of day!

No more, nevermore shall I see thee,
Clear candle of this soul:
For the breaking ocean calls me
With loud, estranging roll.

A WOMAN

SHE in a high walled garden walks,
Drenching each flower;
Or bends above her favourite beds
After each shower.

There seems no trouble in that brow,
Those quiet eyes;
The buds her silent children are,
Their roof the skies.

Was ever kiss upon those lips,
Voice at her ear?
Lived she as now for ever cold
Without a tear?

Ah! in the locked room in the night,
May then be seen,
Signs upon her, as on some shore,
Where the sea hath been.

A BALLAD

I

"GIVE me to drink," the sick man cried,
And straight his wife was at his side;
He drank and of the draught he died.

II

That draught was brewed from drops of hell;
The mortal drink she mixed so well,
He back upon the pillow fell.

III

Adown the stairway slid she white,
She felt a hot kiss without sight,
And all the dark was falsely bright.

MARGARET

ON that high hill above the wold,
When the day has died in gold,
Margaret!

I have sung you mighty verse,
Half of blessing, half of curse,
Margaret!

Yet though night hath brought a breeze,
You are still as frozen seas,
Margaret!

And those lovely eyes are tired,
Orbs of brown I have not fired,
Margaret!

Still you listen wearily,
Striving to be kind to me,
Margaret!

LILY AND ROSE

Roses bring we to our love,
But lilies to the dead,
White flowers to the breathless give,
To the breathing, red.

Yet soon the breathing shall be cold
And earn the purer flower,
The lily hath immortal lease,
The rose an hour.

MABEL

SHE slumbers by the moorland stream
That floods the brown stone fast;
Into that sleep no dream shall come,
No murmur of the past.

Utterly cold she's grown to me,
She careth nevermore;
Though I be plunged in deepest sea,
Or cast on furthest shore.

So quick she was to note each tone,
At every mood to start;
Now death hath turned her into stone
And taken away her heart.

DREAMS AND THE DEAD

DREAMS can bring me back the dead;
I with thee again may tread,
As of old with thee I walk,
Still in the olden garden talk.
Though so rich, the moments fly,
Pass they in futility.
Dull our thought, our speech is slow,
Over the earthy themes we go;
So natural doth the moment seem,
And we as idle as the dream.
No news hast thou of heaven or hell,
I nothing from the earth to tell.
Sudden I wake! Thou art away!
And ah what worlds had I to say!

TREES

O THE trees feel before the soul
The coming thunder-roll;
So long have they been still; to-night
They shivered, but with no delight.
All night I watched them shiver,
As for ever and for ever,
And when the morning faintly shone,
You whom I had kissed wert gone.

THE SONG OF "RANJI"

FROM a throne to the simple sward,
Sudden to pass!
From the aching Asian plains
To the English grass!

From the glitter fierce to the cool,
Over the billow;
From a crown to a cap pale-blue,
From cedar to willow!

From the stillness deep to the roar,
To the green from the waste,
From the howdah to hooting car,
From the hush to the haste!

From salaam to the friendly cheer,
From the prince to the guest.
From the shadowless to the shade,
From the East to the West!

"CRICKET I SING"

(After Walt Whitman)

GAME of all games, than Olympian, Roman,
serener;

Cricket I sing!

Here is no blood barbarian dyeing the sward;
No thumbs turned upward or down.

Only verdure and pipe-clay and silence perfect;
The sacred silence of the game!

Hark! I evolve under ribs of parody soul of
an Epic,

Who knows?

Scintillant, modern, bizarre!

Allons!

The uncertainty, first of rain in the night,
meaning so much, victory or defeat;

The slow rolling of the ground, the roller how
heavy!

Five persons silent, bearing the shafts in front.

One behind, solitary assisting, (he too playing
 his part),
 Or in your ear, camerado, does he but feign
 assistance,
 And in reality shoves not at all?
 The spinning of the coins by the captains
 before the pavilion,
 So much depending!
 The ringing of the bell!
 What bell indeed comparable, ship-bell, fire-
 bell, or bell even of tabernacle non-con-
 forming?
 The arena of set faces!
 (The perfect white, now that I see clearer, of
 the popping-crease),
 The working-man, slunk from his sullen job
 away to the verdurous;
 The faultless, glossy, top-hatted he of the
 West;
 Business eschewed for the day anyhow.
 The fieldsmen emerging, some from one pos-
 tern, some from the other;
 Yet wherefore, insula democratic?
 Is it so easy thus to sever the sheep from the
 goats?

Silent I nudge thee, grim shag inhaler, beside
me sitting,
Dost thou not scent in this custom something
feudal, passé?
To me at least something mouldering, ivied,
baronial.
I know not who thou art, camarado, but from
thy chin I guess thee
A hater of razors and of kings.
I surmise by that stubble democratic.
Revenons!
The stern tacit approach of the first two bats-
men
They take their guard, but glance fearfully
around,
Suspicious of ambush, laid either side.
The sphinx-like umpire, surpliced, motionless!
(Tho' for a matter of that a sudden leg-slash
might render his children fatherless.)
His decision final anyhow; no appeal!
The score-board, infallible, the figures disap-
pearing, returning, silent,
Numerals as of Judgment-day!
The panic of the young out-fieldsman, on test
here,

His first catch coming to him, the sun in his
 eyes,
 No thumbs turned upward, or down; only
 faces,
 Intent, judicial!
 If he should fumble it?
 Come now, memories, ghosts of Lord's, or
 the Oval!
 "W. G." in his prime I see, black-bearded,
 ungainly, autocratic,
 With huge, thoughtful, bound-reaching stroke;
 Resourceful, a cumbrous ground-coverer,
 A luring, slow, aerial trundler,
 Incredulous of umpires!
 Spofforth, greyhoundish, lean, indefatigable,
 Furious, the problem before him;
 The wrist-sleeve masking the uncertain orb.
 Ranji, alert, Oriental, perfidious!
 With swift, sudden, unguessed glances,
 The silk shirt flapping to and fro on the dusk
 body,
 Quivering, mystical shirt!
 Bonnor, ambrosial, flaxen, gigantic, fleet!
 Shrewsbury, unexciting, each stroke a pattern,
 quietly perfect, a teacher.

Blackham, prince behind stumps, gathering
without fear
Demon deliveries;
Oft wounded ever returning!
All these and others many I see as I lounge
and lean on the rails;
All these and others many I see, and I
remember.

THE ENGLISH SABBATH

SMITH in the week was dull enough, God
knows,

But doubly dull upon the Sabbath grows.

An iron gong invites that soul of tin,

A soul too grey for splendour of a sin.

Sure of a heaven, he hears the tinkling bell,

But has not yet ascended to a Hell.

What weight is this that heavier makes the
air?

Hush! 'Tis the load of Smith's ascended prayer

Recoiling back on him from Sabbath cloud,

Returning on him though his knee be bowed.

Each week-day Smith respectably can thief

But on the Sabbath would his God deceive.

He kneels to pray, but ere his prayer has
ceased

Rises in fear his breeches may be creased;

Later his wife from mundane matters free,

Purring her Sabbath scandal pours the tea.

O for some winnowing blast to swirl away

The mouldering mummery of our Sabbath-
day!

LOVE AND THE POET

You wonder why within your arms
Laura, I seem to slight your charms;
And yet when seas our spirit part,
I waft you music of the heart.

I am a poet, born to stray,
And so my thoughts are far away.

When Byron on the Italian breast
His burning brow in passion prest,
Dear Countess, while he gazed on you,
His soul to Mary Chaworth flew.

He was a poet, born to stray,
And so his thoughts were far away.

What woman will this satisfy
In England or in Italy?
It flatters not a lady's ear
That only distance makes her dear.

But every poet, born to stray,
Still feeds upon the far-away.

THE MODERN LOVER

No more, Miranda, shed a tear
That I but flirt, am insincere!
Scan me no more with earnest eyes,
Or seek a meaning in my sighs.
To you I pay a compliment
When nothing that I say is meant.
I flatter, but I will not kneel,
Ever I feign, but never feel.
My wooing is the gayest lie,
A shimmering, flitting phantasy,
Aerial as the butterfly;
And take a care that no one mentions
A hint to me of my "intentions."
I'd not insult you, or intrude
Upon you with "an impulse crude."
Love's but the flurry of a flunkey,
The antic of the ancestral monkey.
The utterance of the soul's upheaval
Is really nothing but primeval;

The solemn, serious "declaration"
Degrades our polished generation.
Remember when your tongue is tartest,
That I, at least, am still an "artist."

MIRANDA'S EYES

WHAT colour are Miranda's eyes?
Will no one tell me, pray?
Now fleeting-blue as April skies,
Sudden a tender grey!
What is the colour of her eyes?

What colour are Miranda's eyes?
Are they of dawn or eve?
A moment laughter in them lies;
The next they seem to grieve.
Tell me the colour of her eyes!

What colour are my mistress' eyes?
Painter lay down thy brush!
How shalt thou seize what ever flies,
Is brief, as is a blush,
The colour of Miranda's eyes?

What is the colour of her eyes,
Those pools of mystery deep?
Whatever lives, whatever dies,
They mirror in a sleep.
Such is the colour of her eyes.

What colour are Miranda's eyes?
For ah! when I her heart
Would prove, I win but wild replies,
Wild as those eyes that dart;
Her heart is changing as her eyes.

NERO'S MOTHER

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT

THIS one-act drama portrays a scene, which but for the exigencies of time would have been included in the play of "Nero," so notably produced by Sir Herbert Tree at His Majesty's Theatre.

The situation here is so intense, that in the author's opinion it can well supply material for a separate one-act play.

PREFATORY REMARK

The Emperor Nero having determined to rid himself of his mother Agrippina, whose influence thwarted him in all his designs, invited her to supper at Baïæ and after many pretended caresses escorted her to a ship which had been especially constructed to collapse in mid-sea. A tempestuous night was necessary to cover his design, but the Gods

gave a brilliant sky and sea without a breath. The ship collapsed as was intended, but Agrippina escaped by swimming and reached her own villa on the Lucrine lake. Here she reflects on what had happened and awaits her doom at the hands of her son.

CHARACTERS

AGRIPPINA (*the mother of the Emperor Nero*).

ACERRONIA (*her friend and companion*).

MYRRHA (*a maid attendant on Agrippina*).

ANICETUS (*a captain of the fleet and an instrument of Nero*).

SABINUS (*a representative of the towns-people on the coast*).

[*The scene is a chamber in the villa of Agrippina on the shore of the Lucrine lake. A large window on the right at back commands a view of the shore and near it is a table with a lamp burning. Lower down stage, on the right is a door communicating by steps with the shore. On the left is another door heavily curtained, leading to the chamber of Agrippina.*

The time is night and as the curtain rises loud shouts and cries can be heard from without congratulating Agrippina on her escape from ship-

wreck the night before. There can be seen the reflected light of many torches hither and thither waved along the beach in token of the popular joy. Myrrha is discovered gazing from the window on the assembled crowd laughing gleefully, and clapping her hands.

As the curtain rises Acerronia comes from the door on the left from the presence of Agrippina.]

MYRRHA.

[Turning excitedly to ACERRONIA who enters.]

Will she not come, the Emperor's mother?
Hark!

[A loud shout arises and cries of "AGRIPPINA" are heard from below.]

Again, and yet again they cry her name,
And some are dancing, many waving torches,
And all aloud for Agrippina call!
Look forth!

[ACERRONIA goes and leans from the window, and a still louder shout is sent up.]

They'll not depart; they will not sleep,
Till Agrippina shows herself to them
Safe from the wrecked ship.

ACERRONIA.

To and fro within
She walks and murmurs to herself; then halts
All suddenly; but moving still her lips
In silence. There's a trouble at the soul,
Which makes her deaf to all this shouted joy.

MYRRHA.

Why! But last night and she escaped ship-
wreck.
She should be rendering thanks upon her
knees.

ACERRONIA.

I tell you there's some fierce tumult within;
She puts some dreadful question to herself.

[A knock is heard, then a still louder shout and in the reflected glare of torches SABINUS from the door on the right bursts into the room with others following.]

SABINUS.

We would congratulate the Emperor's mother. May we not speak with her? Will she not see us?

ACERRONIA.

[Going to the curtained door.]

I'll tell her that you come to speak with her.

[*Exit.*]

SABINUS.

[*To MYRRHA.*]

A moment to declare the public joy
And thanks of all this coast that she is safe,
Delivered from the peril of the deep.

[*Enter ACERRONIA, who pulls aside the heavy curtain as AGRIPPINA enters. AGRIPPINA advances and SABINUS, throwing himself on his knees, kisses her hand. He then rises.*]

SABINUS.

We could not choose, O Lady Agrippina,
But seek you out to show you our delight.

[*A loud shout is again heard.*]

Hark to this multitude that throng the shore,
All hoarse with salutations who await
The sight of you from yonder window thrown.
And not alone have we a cause for thanks
In that a sudden ship-wreck was escaped,
But also that to Nero, to your son,
You now are reconciled, so through the world
Lasting tranquillity is granted us.

AGRIPPINA.

I thank you all for true words from the heart,
And for your simple joy that I am safe,



And to my son last night was reconciled.
How good is human speech that we can trust,
And even though we be royal can believe!
I'll show myself a moment.

[She goes to the window, MYRRHA holding up a golden lamp which lights up AGRIPPINA's face and the acclamations are redoubled. As she turns from the window, SABINUS and his followers make an obeisance and retire.]

AGRIPPINA.

[Slowly.]

Seen from the window, how did yester-night
Appear, disturbed or calm?

MYRRHA.

O calm my Lady.
The bay was like a floor that we could dance
on
And all the coast as clear as in daylight.

AGRIPPINA.

Then does it not seem strange, nay wonderful
That any ship should sink in such a sea,
A brilliant heaven and a breathless deep?

ACERRONIA.

What is so treacherous as a glassy sea,
What is so full of moods and sudden frets?

AGRIPPINA.

[*Eagerly.*]

Ah, that is true!

ACERRONIA.

Some under-current might——

AGRIPPINA.

Yes, yes! who knows? Who can foretell or
guard?

How my heart clutches what my brain rejects!
O to you two I must unfold my soul!
'Twas the uncertain sea; no human guile.
If it were planned! The Gods at least would
 lend
No colour to it.

MYRRHA.

Planned!

AGRIPPINA.

Planned by my son.

ACERRONIA.

Why! It is said he lay upon your breast
Showering his kisses on you.

AGRIPPINA.

 Yes, he laid
His head down on my bosom as of old.
He seemed to me but as a child again,
I stroked his hair, while he would kiss my
 hand,

Or smile up in my face as a babe does.
You cannot guess how eagerly I long
To think that which I wish; and to believe
That which I fear to trust; but I have been
So schooled my brain is mistress of my heart.
O but his touch had ancient tenderness!
His eyes filled with the tears of long ago.
Or were those fingers but the sheathed claws
And talons of the tiger-cat; those tears
A treacherous rheum called up at will? No, no!

MYRRHA.

Mistress!

AGRIPPINA.

[*Sinking in a chair.*]

O if I might have lived secure!
Only a woman busied with her flowers,
And turning unto music at twilight;
That passes from a garden to a grave;
While one saith to another, "Hast thou heard,
She died last night?" O if I might have
dwelt
Safe with the dim untempted Average!
O had I been a wanderer on the road,

That dreams on hay beneath a summer moon,
All night a river running at his ear!
Yet could I quench this fire with any flower?
What fall of dew could slake this thirsting
soul?

O vain, vain, vain!

[*Suddenly rising.*]

Girls, may you never bring
A man-child to the sun; and live to fear
His kisses and grow careful of his clasp!

ACERRONIA.

Imperial Lady, hark not back to that!

AGRIPPINA.

[*Pacing to and fro.*]

Would I had been born barren in the light!
Would I had lingered fruitless to the ground,
Drooping with all my wishes to the earth,
And so escaped the pangs precursing bliss
To others! Why must I in pain bring forth
That which shall tear me, why am I twice
rent?

Wherefore am I delivered of a monster
That naturally on its mother turns,
And sets its teeth there where it drew its life?
What but a lair for adders have I been,
A chest of poison or a dagger sheath?
What but——

[She pauses suddenly, listening.]

MYRRHA.

My Lady, what so suddenly
Arrests you?

AGRIPPINA.

Listen!

ACERRONIA.

I can hear no sound.

MYRRHA.

Nor I.

ACERRONIA.

What cry hath marbled you so still?

AGRIPPINA.

No cry, but—silence! Listen! Why has ceased
So suddenly the clamour from the shore?
There is no single voice that rises now.
Listen! At last comes clear upon the air
The regular murmur of ocean on the stones,
Till now unheard; hushed is the voice of man,
Only the sea hath anything to say.

MYRRHA.

[Going to the window.]

And every torch that but this moment burned,
Is vanished everywhere and all is dark.

*[AGRIPPINA goes and slowly seats
herself in the chair.]*

AGRIPPINA.

Come from the window, touch the harp for
me!
What does this mean? What bodes this sudden
lull?

[MYRRHA begins to touch the harp-strings, when suddenly a loud knock comes on the door beneath. There is a pause.]

MYRRHA.

I cannot hold the harp.

ACERRONIA.

I grow afraid.

AGRIPPINA.

Children, be still! What is it that you fear?
Perhaps Sabinus is returned.

ACERRONIA.

That knock
Had more imperious sound.

AGRIPPINA.

Myrrha, play on.

ACERRONIA.

Lady, forgive me, but I fear to stay.

[She hurries out through the curtain doorway. A second and louder knock is heard.]

AGRIPPINA.

[To MYRRHA, who starts up in alarm.]

O child be still!

Perhaps my son has sent a messenger
For news of me.

MYRRHA.

Why do they open not?
They all are fled below. I cannot stay
Longer. I seem to suffocate with dread.
[She, too, is going out.]

AGRIPPINA.

You, too?

MYRRHA.

O Lady, could I stay, I would,

But——

[*She follows ACERRONIA out.*]

AGRIPPINA.

O there is no escape! Who can escape
From Rome? She sentinels the utmost sea
And sundered island; none can fly from Rome.

[*A sound comes as of a door broken
down. There is the heavy tramp
of armed men on the stair. Then
the door on the right is dashed
open and ANICETUS enters.
AGRIPPINA, who has re-seated her-
self, does not rise; the lamp illu-
minating her face. She does not
deign to speak. At last the silence
is broken by ANICETUS.*]

ANICETUS.

Imperial Lady, the Emperor has sent us
To ask if you are yet recovered quite

The shock of ship-wreck? He can find no
sleep,
Pacing in deep anxiety the shore
And he will have no peace till we return.

AGRIPPINA.

Peace!

ANICETUS.

We would hear from you by spoken
word
What to report to him.

AGRIPPINA.

[*Quietly.*]

Then tell my son
That I am—well; a little shaken yet,
But in a long sleep shall recover quite.
My arm you see is bruised, but even now
Is healing without pain. Tell him from me
His mother would not he should vex himself
With apprehensions; I shall soon be well.

ANICETUS.

I will inform him so.

AGRIPPINA.

And say this, too,
That I would like to go far, far away
And live out what remains to me of life
In deep seclusion, with no rankling thought
But memory; I could join his wife perhaps
Octavia, in Pandateria;
And find her a companion in exile;
Tell him my head is weary of the state,
And aches too much with this Imperial care.
And now, no doubt, it is as well that he
Go on alone; I set him where he is,
Now leave him to himself; I feel that I
Am but a bar to his Imperial dream.
But yet I hope that my son's reign may far
Outsplendour all precedent Emperors,
And with his triumphs Rome may roar and
rock.
My place will be to watch him afar off,

And catch great news of him with throbbing
heart,
Loving him from the limits of the world.

ANICETUS.

I'll so report you.

AGRIPPINA.

[Gradually losing her self-control.]

So I understand

The Emperor is much perturbed in mind.
Can he not find relief in harp-playing,
Or in some verse upon my near escape?

[She rises, speaking with passion.]

O let this solemn folly have an end!
You are sent here to kill me, that I know.

[ANICETUS starts.]

Why else this military silence kept?
And I am caught here without hope of flight,
To die as the rat dies. Give me a sword
And Nero, set us one against the other,

And let me fight for life to kill this whelp.

[*A murmur.*]

But if I must die here, then tell him this,
That dead I'll vex him worse than e'er in life,
Gathering an added swiftness from the tomb,
And unretarded by the body strike.
Did Clytemnæstra need to cry aloud
Upon the slumbering Furies? They shall start
Upon my whisper, hissing in his ear
For all his deep draughts of Falernian wine.
The night may pass, but the red cloud of dawn
Shall bring the colour of his mother's blood.
You, Anicetus, are well chosen here,
You have not yet forgot the public jest
I put upon you before all the court,
I see them laugh still at your scarlet face.
Not all the blood you spill upon this floor
Shall ever wipe that ringing laughter out.

ANICETUS.

Lady, I have forgotten.

[*Half unsheathing his sword.*]

AGRIPPINA.

No, ah, no!

Else would you not so fumble with your sword;

Insult, and blows, and ruin are forgot,

Ridicule never; 'tis the eternal thrust.

This vengeance that you take with arméd men

Is somewhat heavy-handed, Anicetus,

Lacking in lightness and in humour; you

Have no reply but dullness of a blow,

But I have stabbed your littleness more deep

Than ever you my greatness could assail.

*[She snatches up the lamp and dashes
it on the floor, plunging the stage
in darkness.]*

'Tis dark and I am ready for the grave.

*[As one of the soldiers is stealing up
behind her she stops him.]*

Not in the back! In front this wound should
be!

Nero, strike here, here strike where thou wast
born!

*[The curtain rapidly falls as they rush
upon her.]*

THE ADVERSARY

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT OF FOUR SCENES

The idea of this brief drama is based on that of a play by Calderon. Beyond this, it is entirely original.

CHARACTERS

FERNANDO DEL CASTELLANO (*a middle-aged, impoverished descendant of an ancient house*).

MARGUERITA (*his youthful wife, daughter of a wealthy merchant*).

A PHYSICIAN.

AN OLD FAMILY SERVANT.

THE FIGURE.

SCENE I.

[*The chamber of an ancient castle in Toledo. This chamber is evidently stripped and dismantled. Pedestals where statues have stood, outlines upon the walls where old*

pictures have hung, certain figures in armour of FERNANDO'S ancestors alone remain. FERNANDO is sitting with his wife by a dying fire. The time is deep midnight.]

FERNANDO.

O Marguerita, this dismantled room,
This old ancestral chamber stripped and bare,
A leafless forest ruined by the blast,
Strikes to my heart. Pictures and statues,
 blades,
Encrusted long ago with infidel blood,
And holy relics and memorials dear
Bequeathed through ages, sold or carried off!
The glory of our house is past away;
And, dearest, most for thee my heart is sore.
I took thee young from wealth and ease, and
 now
Though still but on the verge of womanhood,
Here have I pent thee in a house despoiled.

*[She draws closer to the scanty fire
as he rises excitedly and paces to
and fro.]*

Yet am I answerable, have I incurred
This ruin? ever thriftily I lived,
Drank not, nor gambled, yet each day, each
hour
Some new misfortune bows me to the earth.
Some enemy remorselessly pursues me.

MARGUERITA.

An enemy! hark back into the past;
Canst thou remember any thou hast wronged
Who takes, though late, this vengeance? Had
thy father
Some foe ancestral and still unappeased?

FERNANDO.

I know of none that ever I have wronged.

MARGUERITA.

Unconsciously, perhaps?

FERNANDO.

Nor did my father
Warn me of any such descended wrath.
This only have I found, that field on field,
And all this long inheritance hath past
Into the hands of one whose name is hid;
Who lunges at my breast behind a mask.
Vainly I seek this foe for evermore.

*[His wife rises, shivering, as the first
grey of the dawn appears.]*

MARGUERITA.

Dawn peereth, I must go in to the child.

*[She kisses FERNANDO and passes
through the decayed arras into an
inner room.]*

FERNANDO.

*[Turning to the armed ancestral
statues.]*

Ye armed ancestral figures of my house,
Ye statesmen dim, captains of long ago,
Declare to me doth any ancient wrong,

Committed in far years, at last on me
Evolve this dreadful consequence? Ah, thou,
Thou old Pizzaro of infamous memory,
Dark tales and legends grim are told of thee,
Thy rapes, thy rapines, and thy blasphemies.
Didst thou engender in a wilder day
A curse, which innocent I expiate?
Speak, one of you now glimmering in dawn.

*[Dawn begins to touch the armed
figures.]*

All silent! Yet I cry again, invoke
The very dead for answer. Who is he,
That hath despoiled me thus and stripped me
bare
And made me naked before all men?

THE FIGURE.

*[Appearing masked and muffled
against the stained window.]*

I. I.

FERNANDO.

[In slow horror.]

Thou? Who art thou? Art thou a breath-
ing thing?

Or but the apparition of a brain
O'ercharged? Thy face is hid. Who art
thou? Speak!

[As FERNANDO slowly approaches the figure, it vanishes as the curtain falls.]

SCENE II.

[The same chamber. Midnight. As the curtain rises the clock strikes twelve. FERNANDO is seen standing in the very place where the figure has disappeared in Scene one.]

FERNANDO.

He then, that figure, muffled close and masked,
Visible suddenly in grey of dawn,
Accused by his own mouth of all this doom,
From him I wrung no answer. As I stole
To'ard him he vanished, silent as he came.

[He looks into the inner room.]

The child sleeps; but his mother! Midnight
struck!

'Tis not her wont to be so late away.

[*Enter an old servant of the house in shabby livery, bearing a letter.*]

SERVANT.

Master, my mistress gave this in my hand
Enjoining I should not deliver it
Until the clock struck twelve.

[*FERNANDO seizes the letter, breaks the seal and reads.*]

FERNANDO.

[*Reading.*]

Husband, I have left thee and my home and
I shall not return. But of this be at least as-
sured, that my honour is unstained. I have
not fled to the arms of any other. Forgive me
and teach the child also to forgive. Mar-
guerita.

[*FERNANDO motions the servant to retire.*]

FERNANDO.

Was not this desolation of my hearth
Heavy enough, that she must now forsake me,
No reason given? Doubtless the gnawing
care,

Anxiety for evermore renewed,
And bareness when in plenty she had lived,
Impelled her to inflict this final blow.

[Suddenly he starts and, softly opening the arras, gazes into the room within.]

But he, our child, how calmly slumbering.
So that but for the colour in his cheek
That sleep might well appear the sleep of
death,

Him even she leaves; a creature of the waste,
And scenting death, will not desert her young.
What influence then, what terror so could
urge her,

Since not into another's arms she fled?
Then what compulsion irresistible?

THE FIGURE.

[Again visible as before.]

I.

FERNANDO.

Thou again, and masked and muffled still!
And with thy own lips dost again pronounce
Thyself the cause of headlong misery.
Thy name! Thou canst not now withhold
thy name!

[*A pause.*]

How have I wronged thee?—Yet what wrong
so deep,
That could this desolation justify?

[*A pause.*]

No answer still? Art thou of flesh and blood?
Or com'st thou from the grave, even in death
Bearing me malice from the underworld?
Art thou perchance a spirit deep incensed,
Still nursing hot a far off injury,
That thus thou dost pursue me hour by hour?
This vengeance seemeth more than mortal
work.

Whate'er ensues I'll put thee to the proof.

[*He rushes towards the figure as
though to grasp it but again it
vanishes as the curtain falls.*]

SCENE III.

[Again the dismantled chamber. Deep night.

FERNANDO *in an attitude of suspense is standing at that arras door, which now opens, and a white-haired physician enters slow and silent.*]

FERNANDO.

[With outstretched arms.]

The child? Still is there hope? Answer me.

[The physician makes no answer but bows his head in silence.]

Dead?

[The physician approaches him and mutely endeavours to console him, leading him to a chair, into which FERNANDO helplessly sinks.]

[The physician seeing his attempts at consolation are futile is about to retire, when FERNANDO stops him with a gesture.]

FERNANDO.

Doctor, these cumulated miseries,
Of which this is the last and worst, I fear,
Have shaken my reason. It has seemed to me
That after each new fallen calamity,
Here in this very room, by yonder window,
A figure has appeared shrouded and masked,
Which, when I cried to heaven to show me
cause

Of these extreme inflictions, answered "I."
Yet could I draw from it no plainer word;
And when I have approached, it vanished
straight.

Tell me, for you maintain an equal pulse,
Is this a self-created apparition,
Born of a fevered and tormented mind?
Or does it come for vengeance and alive?
Watch with me now and re-assure my brain.

PHYSICIAN.

Small wonder that a mind so deeply torn
Should call up phantoms in mere ecstasy!

I will dispatch thee, ere the morning break,
A kind and drowsy syrup to bring sleep.

[*After once again laying his hand on
FERNANDO'S shoulder he silently
retires.*]

FERNANDO.

Almighty God that sittest in the heavens,
Thou Who dost punish, yet with justice, I
Demand of Thee, as Thou wilt judge us all
On that last day when graves give up their
dead,

Why I am thus afflicted and pursued;
First in the desolation of my hearth,
Then in the causeless fleeing of my wife,
Now in the dying of my only child;
What curse is on me?

THE FIGURE.

[*Again appearing.*]

I.

FERNANDO.

Again thou comest,
Now for a third time! 'tis not possible
Thou art a phantom; clearly I behold thee;
I know thee for mine enemy, thou hast said it,
Three times pronouncing thee the cause of
 woe.

I will pursue thee over land and sea,
No forest is so deep that it shall hide thee,
There is no wall so strong, no lock so fast,
That it shall shelter thee. As thou hast me,
So will I thee pursue unto the end.
I am a lonely man, bereaved and stripped;
To this bare task I now devote myself.
Here I take oath in this dismantled room,
By yonder still warm body of my child,
That I will hunt thee sleepless through the
 world,
Till I have called thee to a dread account.

*[He rushes towards the figure as
though to assail it, but again it
vanishes as the curtain falls.]*

SCENE IV.

[*A narrow street ending in a cul de sac. Lurid sunset. The figure is seen striding slowly towards the cul de sac. FERNANDO suddenly appears pursuing, breathless, haggard and unkempt.*]

FERNANDO.

At last I have thee. Hence is no escape!
Here must thou turn at last, at last reveal thee.
Remove thy vizer or I tear it from thee!

[*Drawing his sword.*]

Here, if thou art a thing of flesh and blood,
Thou canst not still refuse me satisfaction,
On guard, sir! I'll not stab thee in the back.

THE FIGURE.

[*Slowly turning and removing his mask discloses the very features of FERNANDO himself.*]

Fernando, art thou satisfied?

FERNANDO.

[With a loud cry.]

Myself!

[He falls dead at the feet of the figure, which stands over him, beginning to fade as the curtain falls.]

THE KING

A TRAGEDY IN A CONTINUOUS SERIES OF SCENES

NOTE

THIS play is constructed after the Greek and not the Shakespearian model, and is divided into a series of scenes, not acts. The subject is one of intense tragedy, but the author hopes that he has treated a story, inevitably grim and reminiscent of the Athenian drama, with something of Greek reticence and dignity.

CHARACTERS

PHILIP (*King of Spain*).

DON CARLOS (*his son and heir*).

GONZAGA (*Prime Minister*).

FERNANDO (*an old servant*).

CHRISTINA (*a lady of the Court*).

Nobles, Prelates, Courtiers, Couriers, etc.

[*The Scene is the ancient capital of Madrid.*]

SCENE I.

Audience Chamber. The Court Assembled.

THE KING.

PRINCES and prelates, nobles, courtiers,
friends!

Now thirty years have I unfaltering
Held in these hands the reins of policy,
And here have pacified and there repressed,
Pursuing peace with unsundered power.
And much of this felicity I owe
To sage suggestion of Gonzaga here.

*[A murmur of admiration runs
through the court.]*

But, friends, I grow weary of my task,
And would relinquish onerous royalty.
And this high seat I lightly abdicate
Since in my vacant room I set my son

*[An applauding shout, which visibly
pleases the King.]*

Carlos. His youth unstained, his grave record
When youthful blood hath license, recommends
him.

But that he might not climb these stairs un-
tried,

But straight from battle to a throne proceed,
Against Granada I have now despatched him.
To expel the encroaching Moor; each moment
now

I look for him; but, happier augury,
I publicly proclaim that he shall wed
The princess child of royal Portugal.
This marriage builds a barrier doubly strong,
Against assault a rampart twice secure.

[*Here CHRISTINA, a lady of the court,
swoons, and is borne outward.*]

So with a twofold gladness I expect
A son that warrior comes and bridegroom, too.

[*A courier rushes in breathless and
kneels before the King.*]

COURIER

Out of Granada, tidings hear, O King!
The city is retaken, the Moor is fled;
And brightest over all in battle burned
The Prince, who by a sudden flank assault
Drove headlong the surprised Moroccan arms;

And still they fled, and still the Prince pursued.

Already hard upon me is our host.

[The sound of arms and bugles of the returning army is heard, and with loud triumphant shouts the court disperses to welcome the victors, leaving only the KING and GONZAGA.]

THE KING

Gonzaga, let me not in flood of joy
Omit a duty. She who swooned but now,
Doña Christina, I have reared till now.
But ere I abdicate I will to leave
A spacious and a broad estate to her,
To be a home, or dowry should she wed.
Her mother I knew well in other days.
I cannot leave her to a youth's caprice,
Who might o'erlook her need, no cause
assigned.
Let this not slip!

GONZAGA

O King, be thou assured.

[A burst of music outside, and DON CARLOS rushes in, blood-spattered, and is caught in his father's arms, who holds him close in silence.]

THE KING

My dear, dear son!—God, for this perfect moment

Let us not suffer afterward! Again,
Again I kiss thee through the spattered blood.
Thou hast no scar?

CARLOS

Scathless have I come off.

THE KING

And now I gird on thee this dazzling toy;
[He girds a jewelled dagger on the Prince.]

A toy, yet capable of mortal use.

*[The Prince draws the blade and looks
smilingly at it.]*

CARLOS

A pretty thing to wear, if not to use.

THE KING

But now to give felicity a crown,

My son, a bride awaits thee!

*[The Prince starts away from his
father, who, however, continues
unconsciously.]*

Ah, this news

Strikes sudden on you! Listen, then!

*[He takes the Prince by the arm,
walking to and fro excitedly.]*

She is

A royal daughter out of Portugal.

This marriage seals two neighbour kingdoms
close,

And builds a bristling frontier 'gainst the
Moor.

So you as soldier and as lover reign!
What is your answer?

[The Prince remains silent, with bowed head. The King stands gazing at him astonished. A pause.]

Carlos, answer me!

[Still the Prince is silent. Again a pause.]

Boy, look up in my face and speak, at least!
And let me have a human word from you!

CARLOS

[Raising his head]

Father, I am o'er-flurried from the war,
Give me a little pause!

THE KING

A pause? But why?
Have I deserved such silence from my son?
Have I not compassed you with deeper love
Than e'er man gave to woman? Since you
lisped,
Have I not hoarded every whisper up?

Have I not cried aloud to God for thee?
Hot speech from you, or maddest reason given
I can endure, but motionless refusal,
Silence and sullenness I will not bear.
That you must seek and choose your phrase I
loathe.
When have I given you cause to hide your
thought,
Until this instant so transparent clear!
[*He paces to and fro in agitation, then
pauses before his son.*]
Still silent!

CARLOS

Father, give me till to-night!

THE KING

Child, you have not lived long enough to
know
What pain you deal me with your secretness.

GONZAGA

Prince, you will pardon me, but on your word
Hangs here the embassy from Portugal.

It will be taken at that fiery court
An insult, making more for war than peace
If this proposéd marriage you defer,
And no cause given.

CARLOS

To-night I'll give the cause,
Father, to you alone—then as you will.

THE KING

How suddenly my bliss is clouded o'er,
And what was free and bright, constrained
and dark.

To-night your certain answer then!

[*Going.*]

To-night!

[*Exeunt KING and GONZAGA. The Prince passes his hand over his brow in a gesture of doubt and terror.*]

SCENE II.

DON CARLOS and CHRISTINA

[The scene is a sequestered arbour in an obscure part of the royal garden. Here amid the shrubs and fragrant bushes of that teeming southern land have these two been accustomed to meet. As the curtain rises they are clasped in a silent embrace.]

CHRISTINA *[drawing slightly apart from him]*

Dear, all the palace rings with thee; thy charge
And headlong, wild, improbable assault,
That from Granada flung the Moor surprised;
And I have listened, glowing secretly.
I said no word, but gloried to myself.
My very silence was more proud than words.
But ah! before the heroic news came in,
The King, thy father, 'pointing you his heir,
Spoke of an alien marriage politic,
To be a barrier and a wall to Spain.
Then, ah, forgive my weakness, I fell back,
Borne to the air.

CARLOS

This moment I have left
My father for the first time wroth and sad;
For well you know that he and I have lived
Transparent as two friends, no shade between
us.

He broke to me this marriage in blind joy:
I answered not; dear, dear, what could I say?
Last he appointed I must answer him
To-night. The embassy from Portugal
Expects from me a "Yes" that will be "No."

CHRISTINA

Carlos, I feel that I should go from you.

*[He starts and clasps her more closely
to him.]*

I stand between you and the public weal.
Belovéd, howsoe'er these lips are sweet,
You shall not set my kiss before a throne,
Prefer a lonely woman to the State.

[He starts impatiently.]

No! hear me to the end. You shall fulfil
This marriage, Love, the issue is too vast;

The safety of this ancient throne, and rule
Of all this murmuring nation. But the heir
That shall be born——

*[She comes close to him, whispering
in his ear.]*

our child already lives.

CARLOS

You mean?

CHRISTINA

For the first time I have felt it stir
Within me; then I swooned amid the court.

CARLOS

[In wild agitation]

Then doubly, trebly, am I now resolved,
Since two lives hang on me, and now not one,
That you shall be my wife, and publicly
Raised to the dazzling splendour I inherit.
O pale the anointing oil, and dim the crown,
If thou wert not beside me sitting; or

I will forego the glory and the war,
The applause, and battle glistening in the sun,
And we will quit the splendour hand in hand,
Walking together like two simple folk,
Who love and cannot see the earth for love.

CHRISTINA

No, no! I must renounce the very life;
The gold presented cup of crimson wine;
And I will be to you as are the dead,
If one can die, and yet consume in flame.
Ah, but renunciation hath a fire,
It is not cold; God knows it is not cold.
What battle like this battle? I forsake
Deliberately, as a woman can,—
For to a man possession is the sum,
The charm, the mystery and azure light;
So strong my love of you; I'll pass away;
And fear not that our babe shall ever know
Who is his father; I will cherish him
By the slow stream and grasses far from
courts.
Even now he feels out blindly toward the sun,
Moving in me as in a world obscure.

We two shall be most happy so alone.
If thou, for we are mystically knit,
Shouldst hear a pretty babble in the night,
Out of strange fields, and know it is thy son,
Yet still be strong; I'll see thee nevermore.

[Suddenly clasping him to her.]

No more! Ah! but thou'lt come, if only once!
And I shall run and hurl me on thy heart,
And as out of great darkness see a light.
But no, come not to me! I'll not forget;
I shall go down, filled with thee, to the grave.
And still I tell thee, put my arms aside!
A boy thou wast, now seek the sterner task!

CARLOS

A boy! I am no boy; deep in my blood,
Too deep, a moment ever to be moved,
My thought of you. Is't the mere touch of
 lips,
To feel my circling arm about your waist,
To murmur verses under fading stars?
Why you encircle me as doth the air,
And nothing breathes or moves apart from
 you.

(The universe hath got from you a soul)
Since first I saw you, on a fated night,
From the dark palace casement secretly,
Leaning with loosened hair to midnight lilies,
O then more solemn grew the woods, the hills
More strange, the mere more perilous still,
More lone the bird, returning in red light,
And ah! that moon new brought upon the
heaven!

Thou art more sweet than souls of evening
flowers

In a dim world, and ere a star hath come.
Vain, vain the throne! for thou alone art real!
But see, the sun is falling down in gold,
And with the night I must await the King.
You'll leave me not?

[Again clasping her close.]

CHRISTINA

I will not. Yet I fear.—

*[He tears himself away as the light
rapidly darkens.]*

SCENE III.

[*The King's Private Chamber. The Prince has asked to see his father alone before giving his answer to the ambassador from Portugal, in regard to the proposed political marriage. The KING and CARLOS.*]

THE KING

Carlos, since first I gave you to the light,
Never a cloud has come between us two.
This is the first, dispel it now with speed!

CARLOS

Father!

THE KING

I have not been o'er-strict with you,
Never asserted a mere father's right.
But we have been as friends; never before
Have you refused me confidence; yet now
You stand in guarded silence which I loathe,

As though you must be careful with your
words;
'Tis this I hate, not any folly done,
Whate'er it be; but that you will not speak
To me, to me, at least.

CARLOS

But I will speak;
Forgive me whatsoe'er I shall disclose;
Father, your life serene to all is known,
Your days ascetic, and, my mother dead,
Never a woman has had power on you.

THE KING

O, it is that way, is it; so I guessed;
[*Taking his son's arm, he walks to
and fro with him in a friendly
fashion.*]

Listen! A young man's trouble, natural
To youth, appears to stay you from this marriage.

'Tis difficult to take a solemn view,
[*The Prince starts.*]

Yes, yes, I know! I only ask of you
That you are free with me; I have the right.
I'll save your blushing cheek and stammering
tongue;

Hunting perhaps the deer, or walking lone
Through distant villages, you saw some maid,
Simple and sweet amid our summer fields,
Her beauty breathing fragrant as the hay,
And lingering with her in a twilight lane,
Followed the kiss and then the uttered word,
By passion sped, repented in the cold.

CARLOS

No, no, you understand me not at all.

THE KING

Too well I understand. But I would tell you
I cannot take this prank of blood as grave.

*[Laughing as he walks with the Prince
to and fro.]*

Twilight, a hedge of may, and coming stars,
A face amid the dimness! All is said.
Confess now, I have hit you.

CARLOS

Father, no!

THE KING

Still, still you will not satisfy me, boy;
Have I not made confession's pathway soft?
And yet you will not tread it. Silent still!
Now I will humble my white hair to you,
And tell you, I myself, young then as you,
Was drawn into sweet folly; but the throne
Demanded me and all this people's care.
Then I dismissed each wanton, wandering
thought,
And set my teeth and rose to sterner things.
And this you too must do; the occasion cries
Aloud for sacrifice of crude desires,
It asks for wisdom, wildness put aside.

CARLOS

Pity me, father!

THE KING

Now that I have bent
So far, as to unfold to my own son

A far-off folly, is it much I ask
That you should open to me all your soul?
Come, come! Some girl you cannot bring to
court.

CARLOS

No, for she is already of the court!

THE KING

Ah, this is better. For at least this fault
Was with some lady nobly born?

CARLOS

'Tis so.
She hath been nobly born, and in her face,
Her step, the certain proof of lineage high.

THE KING

But there hath been no secret marriage, speak!

CARLOS

As yet no marriage!

THE KING

Then my fears are o'er.

All this is easy, and what seems to you
So tangled, this Gonzaga can unravel,
For he is ripe and still and unsurprised.
You say it is some lady in my court.
I'll not demand her name; unless you give it,
And be assured, for my own sake that name
Shall never be divulged.

CARLOS

Sir, you have been
So open and so much a trusted friend
All those past years, and now you show your-
self
So easy with me that I'll not keep back
The name of her I love.

THE KING

You love? Ah well!—

CARLOS

Believe me that I do.

THE KING

[Smiling.]

I once thought so.

Well, well?

CARLOS

The name I call her is Christina.

[*The King starts back, grasping the rail of the throne; there is a breathless pause.*]

Father, I know not of her parentage,
Nor who her mother and her father were;
It is sufficient that she is received
Among the noble ladies of your court.
So much for that; but that her blood is proud,
You, you yourself—if you would scan her
close,
Could not deny; even royal I would take her,
But that I know that here she would not stand
Attending, came she true from royalty.

THE KING

[*With difficulty recovering speech.*]

But there has been no marriage.

CARLOS

No, not yet.

THE KING

O boy, be frank with me; I am very old,
If only then that I am old refuse not
Answer!

CARLOS

I will not. All things I will tell.

THE KING

Then how far has this matter gone, say, say!
You think me too impatient, but impatience
Is due to tremulous age. I understand
Almost without the telling, it has been
The kiss forbidden and the secret speech
And ancient poetry beneath the moon,
The touch of hand—yes, yes, perhaps the clasp,
When the last star is fading to the dawn,
No more?—You understand, I press you not.
But there hath been no more?

CARLOS

There has been more.

THE KING

But you two, you are not abandoned yet
To the act of fire?

CARLOS

Even to the act of fire.

THE KING

God, God!

CARLOS

O, Sir, you say that you yourself
Were in your youth not guiltless, why of me
Ask such a dread account? Father, I love you,
I love you, ah forgive me.

THE KING

I love you.

CARLOS

Then here I kneel, I pray you to forgive me,
I will not loose your knees till you relent.

THE KING

[*Kissing the bent head of the Prince*]
I kiss you as of old.

CARLOS

I feel your tears
Drop on my hair.

THE KING

Vain tears of an old man.
But one thing else; so far then things have
gone
Between you, but no issue of that act?

CARLOS

Alas! I have just learned from her own lips
That I have brought new life into this world.

THE KING

O Thou, that sittest in Thy heaven, relent!
They say that when a thing is done 'tis done.
It is a lie; our lightest act takes wings,
And is made free of space for evermore.

CARLOS

But, father, though a child is born to me
Out of this passion and none borne to you,
Am I therefore more guilty than yourself?
And for this reason now am I resolved
That she shall be my wife, and publicly
My wife proclaimed; my love had been
enough.
But now this marriage is demanded of me.

THE KING

This marriage cannot be.

CARLOS

[Angrily approaching his father]

What, then, shall stay me?
Let go the crown! The high, imperial seat!

The glory and the marching hosts of war.
All these are faint beneath a woman's smile.
What then shall stop me, or who shall inter-
vene?

Not you yourself, you even, my very father.
What high compulsion?

THE KING

This: I am her father.
[*The King falls backward unconscious
on the throne, the Prince stagger-
ing from him in horror.*]

SCENE IV.

[*Again the secluded arbour. CHRISTINA, sing-
ing softly to herself, starts suddenly to
her feet as she is aware of CARLOS stand-
ing silently gazing on her; but not as
formerly approaching her.*]

CHRISTINA

Ah! [*She rushes towards him. He steps back-
ward, motioning her away. She stands
transfixed.*]

Love, why do you motion me away?
And say no word at all? Why may I not
Fly to thee to be gathered on thy heart
As ever? What is my unconscious fault?
What is my ignorant trespass? Or has thy
father

Between us fixed a gulf as deep as that
Between the poor man and the rich in hell?
Or hast thou done some rash thing in thy rage?
Carlos, thou hast not stained thy hands in
blood?

Horrible! in his blood? Thou dost not stir!
And still and dim thou growest and far-off,
Looking into my eyes a long farewell.
Love, if I may not come to thee, yet tell me,
And swiftly, in warm words, what hath be-
fallen,

What sudden thing hath come between us two?

CARLOS

No sudden thing, but one far back in time.

CHRISTINA

I cannot gather this. Is't that he knows—

CARLOS

He knows.

CHRISTINA

Even then 'tis not in thee
To shudder away from me; rather to hold me
Closer, and with strong arms to shelter me.
If we have sinned beyond a father's pity,
Then with how many lovers are we damned!

CARLOS

[With repressed passion]

Believe me that I have not shrunk from you
From ebbing passion, or from guilty fear.
At heaven I'd spit back immortality,
Might I one moment cross this yard of ground
That separates us now: but we henceforth
Must keep a measured distance evermore.

CHRISTINA

Is then our love so cursed?

CARLOS

[*Wildly*]

Cursed? Ah, how cursed!

Lady, no love was ever cursed as this.

Our kiss was potent to put out the stars.

CHRISTINA

Lady!

CARLOS

Come thou no nearer, but declare
Whose child thou art.

CHRISTINA

My mother I remember—

CARLOS

Thy father?

CHRISTINA

Died, they said, ere I was born.

CARLOS

But if he lives?

CHRISTINA

He lives? My father lives?

CARLOS

And reigns!

CHRISTINA

I reel and fall into thy arms.

CARLOS

I must not clasp her, tho' she reel and fall;
I dare not touch her body even in death.

CHRISTINA

[Recovering herself in slow effort.]

And all that time thy kisses were—how sweet!

[A pause.]

Yet all unconsciously we came to this,
And in all innocence have we loved.

CARLOS

Yet unto this we came.

CHRISTINA

O Carlos, now
A sterner summons asketh more of us
Than just to part; that I should say farewell,
And pass out of thy life for evermore.
Now not to thee alone I say adieu;
I say farewell to all the earth at once.
I stifle to be gone; I ache to plunge
In the pure water of the purging grave.
And yet—and yet—O, I must cry it out
To all the gods assembled with cold eyes.
I love, love, love thee, past all bar of birth.
Forgive me, Christ, I cannot help but love
him.

CARLOS

Cease! Or I'll leap this interval of earth,
And in the face of God Himself regain thee.
[*A silent flash of lightning is seen.*]

They thrust at us from on high; there is no
need:

For me this earthly steel suffices well.

*[Touching the dagger with which he
is girded.]*

CHRISTINA

For thee and me—together must we die.

CARLOS

Now 'tis the deep of night.

CHRISTINA

I will not wait
The sun with curious accusing beam.

CARLOS

This love was of the night, not of the sun.

CHRISTINA

This night then, and with speed! Surely we
two

Of all who ever loved are most unhappy.
Lovers who fell in death in olden time
Might sob the life out in each other's arms.

CARLOS

Or she did take the poison from his lips.

CHRISTINA

A venom sweet—though all the dark to come!

CARLOS

His whisper weakened, yet into her ear.

CHRISTINA

Dimmer she gazed, but yet into his eyes.

CARLOS

Over them came old odour of red may.

CHRISTINA

Or the sweet rustle of forbidden lanes.

Yet without cry, but with a Roman heart
We seek the steel that giveth honour back.

CHRISTINA

[*Gently*]

Perchance, when we have winged a separate
flight,
When we are free of flesh, from blood
released,
God will not place his bar between our spirits,
For nowise in the spirit have we erred.

CARLOS

[*Drawing the dagger given him*]

This blade my father gave me in his joy;
See how the jewelled haft sparkles and gleams.
'Tis fitting we should use it in our sorrow.
Now to some darker place, that we may die.

CHRISTINA

Carlos, *thou, thou* wilt kill me first.

CARLOS

I cannot.

CHRISTINA

Give me the steel! I feared that I might strike
Uncertainly: the child here must not linger.

*[She, taking the glittering dagger,
goes slowly out, he following her.]*

SCENE V.

*[The Throne-Room. The King is seen standing
near the throne, which he does not
ascend, GONZAGA attending.]*

GONZAGA

[After a pause. He speaks somewhat lightly.]
The affair no doubt is angry and perplexed,
More deeply difficult than any I
Have disentangled. But no problem yet,
No situation howsoe'er confused,
Hath baffled me; and with the sagest heads,
The wariest brains, my lot hath been to fight.
Doubt not, Your Majesty, that he who once
Outthought and outdid scheming Angelo,
Shall bring to wisdom fancy of a boy.

THE KING

No fancy, it hath struck too deep, I fear.

GONZAGA

Nothing in youth strikes deep; or not so deep,
But it can be persuaded or outplucked.
Leave then the boy to me. I have dispatched
On all sides messengers to find him out
And bring him to a private conference
Forthwith; he hath not gone far in so short
time.

Leave him to me and be yourself unseen.
You by, I cannot undertake to speak
That which I have already in my mind.
And I have here a list of those most near,
Both to your throne and heart; to call them in
And at the fitting moment speak to them.
But be not seen; each moment he may come.
Such was the summons that he must obey.

THE KING

I'll go apart; God aid your conference.

*[Exit the King. Meanwhile a courier
has entered, with lantern, who
stands silent.]*

GONZAGA

[*Seeing Courier*]

Well, have you found the Prince? When will
he come?

FIRST COURIER

My lord, where'er you sent me I have searched
But found no sign.

GONZAGA

Nor heard you any news?

FIRST COURIER

From no one could I glean a certain word.
[*A second courier appears on the other side.*]

GONZAGA

[*To First Courier*]

Well, go again! Don Carlos must be found.
[*Exit First Courier.* GONZAGA turns
on the second.]

And you?

SECOND COURIER

All o'er the palace garden dark
I sought and left no cranny unexplored.
Night makes more difficult our task; the eye
Deceives, and we must touch to be assured.

[A third courier comes in behind him.]

GONZAGA

You there who come behind, you have some
clue?

THIRD COURIER

None, none, my lord, I fear the Prince is gone.

GONZAGA

Gone whither?

THIRD COURIER

That I cannot tell. But we
Lose time to look for him still hereabout.

GONZAGA

Back, both of you! Although all night you
spend.

You'll be well paid; the King for tidings
chafes.

[Exeunt Second and Third Couriers.

*GONZAGA, impatiently turning
from them, encounters an old man,
entering slowly on the opposite
side, holding his left hand behind
him.]*

GONZAGA

Ah! old Fernando! well from you I knew
I would have certain tidings at the last.
Is the Prince on his way?

FERNANDO

Ay! But not hither.

GONZAGA

Darkly you speak. And why behind you held
Your left hand, as to hide some precious
thing?
A jewel is it?

FERNANDO

'Tis a jewelled thing.

GONZAGA

What then?

FERNANDO

[*Holding a dagger blood-stained.*]
A blade, and dyed with twofold blood.

GONZAGA

[*Starts back in horror.*]
This is his answer eloquent to me!

FERNANDO

This blood I know; 'tis that of my young lord;
For I have bound up many a careless wound
He has incurred; the other blood was strange.
But I have found from whom the stream hath
 flowed.

GONZAGA

Say then what other blood with his is mixed.

FERNANDO

I came upon two lying motionless
In a dark covert; and the moon was full.
They lay in no embrace, not even hand
In hand was clasped, nor to each other turned;
As though they feared each other more than
 death,
And yet they looked a lover and his love.
The Prince I knew, and by his side the blade.
The other——

GONZAGA

But one other there could lie.
Give me the knife! You still composure keep,
And summon all of those here written down,
That they attend forthwith in the outer room
The pleasure of the King. Take this and go.

[*Exit FERNANDO with papers. GONZAGA stands gazing on the dagger held before him. Silently the King enters from behind the throne. There is a pause.*]

THE KING

That blade I gave to Carlos.

GONZAGA

He hath used it.
[*The King for a time preserves a deadly calm.*]

THE KING

This is the life-blood of my only son.

GONZAGA

O King!

THE KING

And she——

GONZAGA

She too hath dyed the steel.

THE KING

Strange that I cannot cry aloud, nor weep!
Give me the dagger! It is doubly mine;
This horror muffles me as in a dream,
And all unreal is this encrusted toy.

*[Suddenly, with a loud cry, he reels
backward, caught in GONZAGA'S
arms.]*

My children!

[A pause; slowly he recovers himself.]
Two I had; a boy and girl,

I with a far-off kiss have slain them both.
If they can die so young, then I so old
Will follow them down to an equal tomb,
I, the grand cause, and this at least I owe,
My place is with them.

GONZAGA [*pointing to the throne*]

No, thy place is there,
With suicide an opiate refused,
And madness a rejected luxury.
Thy life is not thy own; thou canst not now
Abdicate, leaving on the throne a ghost;
Whate'er it cost, thou must resume thy reign.
And I have news of the advancing Moors,
Granada is retaken; in the hour
Of public peril crush the private grief;
The nobles, sharers of our inner mind,
I have convened already; they await
A word to gather round thee as of old.

[GONZAGA gives a sign, and the higher
nobles of the court enter the
throne-room in silence.]

THE KING

Gentlemen, but a little while ago
My abdication I declared and made
My son successor to this arduous chair.
That son, my son, is dead and lies self-slain
In the dark garden; through my fault he died.
When I was young I took too little heed,
And in rash passion I begot a child,
A daughter whom I brought into the court.
This was a young man's folly natural,
But see to what a doom those kisses led.
My son,—if my voice break a little, yet
Have patience—my dear son this daughter
loved,
Unknowing.

*[A murmur of astonishment amid the
court, who yet preserve a respect-
ful silence.]*

They two secretly would meet.
My sin was but rehearsal of their sin,
A sad enacting of the tragic scene.
With a new life he filled her; learning then
That they inherited a common blood.

They saw but one path, and that path they
took,
And lie together in some grand embrace,
Not now forbidden. When this doom I heard,
I too resolved me on a similar grave.
But now I see how easy it is to die,
How hard to live. This throne I re-ascend.

*[He mounts the steps of the throne
alone, unaided.]*

Bring me again the crown, anoint me fresh
With oil; a second coronation this.

*[The crown is again placed on his
head, he is anointed with oil, in
silence and with no triumphant
cry.]*

Here I resume my reign without a hope;
My life is ashen, as this ashen dawn
That comes upon these windows colourless;
It is as grey, it is as cold, as faint.
Yet here I take it up. I had supposed
That double death were punishment enough;
Sequel how solemn to so frail an hour.
But God, unsatisfied, must still inflict

This grander chastisement, that I must reign,
And unforgetting seem that I forget,
Losing dead children in a living task.
I have laid bare my soul before you all,
Nothing have I concealed and nothing slurred.
Most humbly now I re-ascend the throne.

*[The whole of the court fall on their
knees in a silence of supplication.
There is a pause.]*

Hark! In the bleakness a half-note of birds.

CURTAIN

